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SUBJECT: MARINE CASE UPDATE 06/19/06

REF: MANILA 2426 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (U) After a three-day holiday weekend and the court's regular Tuesday off, the trial of four U.S. Marines accused of raping a Filipina resumed June 14 with the testimony of NCIS special agents and NCIS locally employed staff. Post greatly appreciates the support of the Department and all other actors who assisted in the speedy resolution of the diplomatic immunity issues surrounding NCIS testimony in this case. Local media covered the NCIS testimony widely and fairly, drawing extensively on Mission's press statement in its coverage. Mission has continued to emphasize in all statements that we are committed to seeing that justice is served through a fair and impartial trial and that both our legal systems adhere to the concept of innocent until proven guilty.

¶2. (U) Manila NCIS SA Ron Beltz and SA Guy Papageorge testified June 14; Singapore NCIS SA Brian Curley and Manila NCIS LES Tony Ramos testified on June 15. All testimony focused on the witnesses' reiteration and recall of events documented in NCIS's written reports. Singapore NCIS SA Bruce Warshawsky is expected to give similar testimony on June 22.

¶3. (U) Ambassador and Senior Mission officers continue to ensure that senior GRP officials appreciate the importance of a fair and impartial trial. Septel reports Ambassador and Admiral Fallon's breakfast with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo at which this issue was briefly discussed.

¶4. (U) Mission continues to provide security, citizen service, and other support to the Marines during the trial. Personnel from Third Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF), JUSMAG, Regional Security Office (RSO), and the Consular Section continue to attend all court sessions. RSO remains pleased with the extent and quality of security support being provided by the mayor's office and police department in Makati, where the trial is taking place.

Kenney